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USDA Forest Service Invests in Rural Communities ***Revenue Sharing Program to Aid Schools and Improve Roads***

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3, 2011 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that more than \$389 million is being distributed to 41 states and Puerto Rico for public schools and roads and specific county programs.

"The annual revenue sharing payments are part of the Department of Agriculture's long-standing commitment to rural communities, schools and American youth," said Vilsack. "Our century-long support of America's public schools and roads is one of many ways in which USDA and the Forest Service, as good neighbors and partners, contribute to rural communities becoming self-sustaining and prosperous."

Since 1908, 25 percent of Forest Service revenues from timber sales, mineral leases, recreation, grazing and other sources have been shared with states and counties in which national forest lands are located.

In the 1980s Forest Service revenues began to decline, largely as a result of changes in social values and diminished timber sales volume. The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 authorized enhanced and gradually declining payments to ease the transition to reduced federal revenues. Counties received more than \$2.5 billion over seven years until the Act expired in September 2007.

In 2008, the Congress extended the program four more years, through 2011. Under the extended Act states and counties will receive another \$1.7 billion to help transition to reduced payment levels.

In addition to payments for schools and roads, the Secure Rural Schools Act supports Firewise Communities programs, reimburses counties for emergency services on national forests and funds development of community wildfire protection plans. Secretary Vilsack also highlighted the Act's successful Title II program that provides additional funding for projects recommended by local resource advisory committees to maintain national forest infrastructure, improve the health of watersheds and ecosystems, provide employment and strengthen local economies.

"Citizen committees are reviewing and recommending projects in more than 300 counties,"

said Vilsack, "and local collaboration is leveraging \$172 million into employment opportunities in rural communities."

The [payments table](#) displays the distribution of payments to Puerto Rico and the 41 states in which national forests are located.

More information on the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act is on the web at www.fs.fed.us/srs

The Forest Service manages approximately 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. For more information, visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/srs/> .

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